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AUTHOR	Edwards, Ralph; Willie, Charles V.
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ABSTRACT

This book explores the dynamics of power among racial groups in the local community as they struggle for the fulfillment of their unique and joint goals through public education. Case studies of two educational issues are analyzed in this book. One has to do with the hiring and firing of the first black superintendent of the Boston (Massachusetts) public schools, and the other explores the campaign to transform the Boston school committee from an elected to an appointed organization. These case studies are prototypes of educational issues faced by many communities. In 1985, Laval Wilson became Boston's first African American superintendent of schools, only to be dismissed in 1990. In this situation, black leaders in the Search Committee acknowledged that they represented different constituencies among people of color and did not attempt to act as a unified group. In winning Laval's appointment, the efforts of blacks were complemented by people from other ethnic communities. When Boston's 13-member school committee was abolished, with the proposal that it be replaced by an elected 7-member board, the blacks in cooperation with working-class neighborhoods of Irish and Italian voters almost derailed the movement to change the way the school committee was selected. Because these groups did not establish a coalition, they were ultimately defeated, and the Governor signed a bill that resulted in an appointed school board. This book describes how dominant and subdominant population groups win and lose in the community power game of public education. A list of 84 sources for further reading is provided. Each chapter contains references. (SLD)

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